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THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

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The word SABBATH, signifies *rest*, in the sense of ceasing from labor. The Christian Sabbath, therefore, denotes that day on which, according to the laws of Christianity, we cease from labor and attend to the interests of religion.

There are three distinct theories held concerning the Sabbath, by persons professing to ground their opinions upon the Scriptures.

1. Some hold that the Seventh-day-Sabbath is binding, as it was delivered to the Jews, and observed by them on the Seventh day of the week. They contend that the Gospel has not abolished, changed or modified it, only so far as is involved in the change that has taken place in religious exercises to be performed on that day.

2. Others hold that the Gospel has abolished the Jewish Sabbath, without instituting any other

in its place, so that as Christians, we have no Sabbath, binding upon us of divine authority. Some of this class repudiate the Sabbath as a positive evil, while others believe it to be a useful institution, suited to the wants of society, but base its observance wholly on expediency, denying that we have any divine authority for observing one day more than another.

3. A third class hold that we are under the law of the Sabbath as much as the Jews were, but insist that while the gospel continues the law of the Sabbath in full force, it has changed the day on which it is to be celebrated, from the seventh to the first day of the week. This is the view held by the great majority of Christians, and it is this view that is proposed to be advocated in this brief treatise.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH CELEBRATED ON THE FIRST
DAY OF THE WEEK IS OF DIVINE APPOINTMENT,
AND BINDING UPON ALL CHRISTIANS.

1. The observance of the Christian Sabbath was foretold in a very remarkable prophecy, as connected with and following the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doings ; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”—Psalm cxviii. 22, 23, 24.

If the above text does prophetically refer to the Christian Sabbath ; if by “the day the Lord hath made,” is meant the Christian Sabbath, set apart in commemoration of the resurrection of our Lord, which occurred thereon ; and if by re-

joining and being glad in it, is meant the joy and gladness of Christian worship, the argument must prove conclusive in support of the divine appointment of the Christian Sabbath. Now, how any one can fail to see all this in the prophecy under consideration, must be very difficult for an unsophisticated mind to understand.

1. The text cannot be applied to any other event of sufficient importance to entitle it to occupy so lofty a note in the song of the Prophet. Some remarkable day or event must be intended ; something worthy to be noted upon the chart of the divine administration ; something worthy to be celebrated in anticipation, by an inspired prophetic song, breathed through the Seer by the Holy Ghost. On geographical maps and charts, principal cities, towns, rivers and mountains are marked ; and so God has distinguished great events upon the prophetic chart, and upon the record of his administration. The creation of the world was deemed worthy of a monument which was the seventh day rest. The destruction of the old world by water was a marked event. The deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, and the institution of the Mosaic system constitute another important era. So was the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ an important event in the history of the world ; and his death and resurrection, whereby he triumphed over death and the grave, and brought the light of immortality to dawn upon human destiny, constitute the great central and radiant epoch in the divine administration, and in the history of the world. It is not only clear that the prediction cannot be applied to any other event, but that it is appropriate, expressive, commemorative and gloriously radiant when applied to the day of the Saviour's triumph over death and the grave. " This is the

day which the Lord hath made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it." What day is so well calculated to awaken joy and gladness as that on which the Saviour arose ?

"The theme, the joy, how then shall man sustain ?
O the burst gates ! crush'd sting ! demolished throne !
Last gasp of vanquished death—shout earth and heaven,
This sum of good to man ! whose nature then
Took wing and mounted with him from the tomb.
Then, then, I rose ; then first humanity
Triumphant past the crystal ports of light—
Stupendous guest ! and seized eternal youth."

Indeed, the resurrection of Christ is more worthy of a monument than creation itself ; more worthy to be commemorated on its weekly return, with ardent devotion, rejoicing with hope and glad songs of praise. There is no other day on which we have so much cause to rejoice as that on which our Lord arose, and to this the prophetic song must refer, and to it the Christian poet has added,

"On this glad day a brighter scene
Of glory was display'd,
By God, th' eternal Word, than when.
This universe was made.

"He rises, who mankind has bought,
With grief and pain extreme ;
'Twas great to speak the world from nought :
'Twas greater to redeem."

If, then, the prediction cannot be applied to any other event or day with any degree of propriety, and if it does apply with clearness, propriety and force to the resurrection of Christ, it prophetically points out the Christian Sabbath as a day

for celebrating the Redeemer's triumph over death, by the joy and gladness of Christian worship.

2. The prophecy clearly, upon its face, refers to the death and resurrection of Christ, and has been so applied by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner," is an expression which can be applied to nothing else but the rejection of Christ and his triumph. "Jesus said unto them, did ye never read in the Scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doings and it is marvellous in our eyes."—Matt. xxi. 42.

"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."—Acts, iv. 10, 11.

"Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious; but unto them which is disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."—Peter, ii. 7.

It is perfectly plain from the above Scriptures, that the Prophet was speaking of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, when he exclaimed, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it" The day referred to, "which the Lord hath made," is clearly the day on which the rejected stone became the head stone of the corner, and that was the day when Christ arose from the dead. He was rejected by the Jews and put to death; but he "was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead."—Rom. i. 3. Then the rejected stone became the head stone of the corner. The Pro-

phet clearly had his eye on the triumph of the resurrection, and the subsequent joy of Christian worship, when he sung, "this is the day which the Lord hath made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it," to which every true Christian heart responds,

" Welcome sweet day of rest
That saw the Lord arise,
Welcome to this reviving breast,
And these rejoicing eyes."

If then it is clear, as has been shown, that the observance of the Christian Sabbath was predicted, as connected with and following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it follows that the institution is not only a commemorative monument of that event, but that it constitutes a part of the divine economy.

II. *The history of the Christian Sabbath clearly proves it to be of Divine appointment, binding upon all Christians.*

In discussing this proposition several points must be examined.

1. The day on which Christ arose, began to be observed immediately by the apostles and their associates, and has clearly been observed ever since. It gives force to this fact that the first meetings were honored by the presence of Jesus Christ. The following is the record of the first meeting :

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them. Peace be unto you."—John, xx. 19.

The following is the record of the second meeting :

"And after eight days again his disciples were

within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."—John, xx. 26.

In the expression, "after eight days," the day of the first meeting is reckoned as one, which brings the next first day, the eighth; it was therefore on the resurrection day that he appeared to them the second time, they being assembled in their private room. That from these first meetings with the Saviour, the practice of observing the first day of the week for the celebration of Christian worship, followed and increased until it entirely superceded the Jewish Sabbath among all Christians, there can be no doubt.

Twenty-five years after the above transactions, we have the following record:

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight."—Acts, xx. 7.

This all looks very natural, upon the supposition that the first day of the week was the day on which Christian worship was regularly celebrated. Observe, first, the disciples came together to break bread on the first day of the week. This was doubtless the celebration of the Lord's supper, and it is clear that this was the day set apart for its observance. They came together for this very purpose. Observe, secondly, that Paul availed himself of this meeting to preach his farewell sermon to them, "ready to depart on the morrow." Thus was he to commence his journey on the first day, after the Christian Sabbath, allowing this to have been their regular day for celebrating Christian worship, as it already was. Understanding it thus, the whole is a very natural transaction. This transaction was at Troas.

One year later, the apostle wrote the following to the Corinthian Church :

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."—1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

From this it is plain that the Christian assemblies were convened on the first day of the week, and that such observance of the day had the apostle's sanction. On these last two texts, Dr. Clarke has given significant comments. On the former he says, that the first day of the week was "what was called the Lord's day, the Christian Sabbath, in which they commemorated the resurrection of our Lord, and which among all Christians afterwards took the place of the Jewish Sabbath." On the latter text he remarks, "It appears that the first day of the week, which is the Christian Sabbath, was the day on which their principal religious meetings were held in Corinth and the churches of Galatia ; and, consequently, in all other places where Christianity had prevailed. This is a strong argument for keeping the Christian Sabbath."

2. It is a significant fact that, as the observance of the first day of the week increased by the increase of Christianity, the observance of the Jewish Sabbath declined, until it wholly ceased where Christianity prevailed. It is no objection that the change was not sudden and entire, it could not be in the nature of things. All minds are not affected alike by the presentation of the same truths and evidences. Some are suddenly and entirely convinced, and by a single mental operation grasp the entire conclusion resulting from the premises presented. Others go through a

slow mental process to reach the same results, and embrace the truth, and see and admit conclusions, item by item ; hence some embrace parts of a theory before they embrace the whole. Some would naturally take up the Christian Sabbath and at once drop the Jewish Sabbath on the first presentation of the idea, while others would fall in with them so far as to observe the Christian Sabbath, and still continue to observe the Jewish Sabbath. The exceeding tenacity of the Jews on the subject of the seventh day Sabbath, may have rendered it necessary for the first Christians among them, to observe it as a matter of personal safety, nor can it be maintained that they necessarily violated any moral principle in so doing. It would not even be strange that many Jews, who became devoted Christians, should have, from the power of their education, continue to observe the seventh day Sabbath, observing both days.

Another consideration is, that up to the time of the destruction of the Jewish nation, which took place about A. D. 90, the apostles and all Christian ministers of Jewish origin, must have found it advantageous to observe the Jewish Sabbath, by attending their service, for the purpose of preaching the gospel to them. The only means of reaching them with the truth, generally, was to attend at the temple and in the Synagogues, on the seventh day. This accounts for the fact that the apostles appear to have so frequently attended the Jewish assemblies on the Sabbath day. It is also a sufficient answer to the objection, that the first Christians worshipped more frequently on the seventh, than on the first day of the week. They doubtless maintained their own peculiar Christian assemblies on the first day of the week, and on the Jewish Sabbath mingled in their assemblies with a view to their conversion.

But it is clear, as asserted in the proposition under consideration, that the first day of the week came to be generally observed by all Christians, and that the Jewish Sabbath sunk gradually into disuse, as Christianity prevailed. The following text is sufficient to prove this point :

“ Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath-days.”—Col. ii. 16.

To what Sabbath does the apostle refer? It cannot be to the Christian Sabbath, for he was speaking of what was enjoined by the law, and that never was. Moreover, the Christian Sabbath was called the Lord's day, and not the Sabbath.

It must be, then, that the apostle refers to the Seventh day Sabbath, and he gives them clearly to understand that they are not morally bound to observe it. Nor can it be maintained with any degree of plausibility, that the apostle speaks of other days as feast days called Sabbaths. He uses the Greek word, *Sabbaton*, which is every where used to denote the seventh day Sabbath, without giving any notice that he means anything else ; and while, by “ a holy-day ” and the “ new moon,” he includes all other feasts and rests which might be called Sabbaths, leaving nothing but the seventh day Sabbath to be meant by the Sabbath days. Dr. McKnight has given the following comment on the text, “ The whole of the law of Moses being abrogated by Christ, Col. ii. 14, Christians are under no obligations to observe any of the Jewish holidays, not even the seventh day Sabbath. Wherefore, if any teacher made the observance of the seventh day a necessary duty, the Colossians were to resist it. But though the brethren, in the first age, paid no regard to the Jewish seventh day Sabbath, they set apart the first day of the week for public worship, and for

commemorating the death and resurrection of their master, by eating the supper on that day ; also for the private exercise of devotion. This they did either by the precept or the example of the apostles, and not by virtue of any injunction in the law of Moses." This comment of Dr. McKnight, is not to be construed as implying the abrogation of any part of the moral law ; the obligation of the fourth commandment is continued in our obligation to observe the Christian Sabbath, the change of the institution from one day to another, in no sense involves the abrogation of the essential law of the institution. From the text under consideration two points are clear. First, some were disposed to censure the brethren for not observing the Sabbath days. "Let no man judge in respect to the Sabbath days," implies that they were assailed on this ground. The second point is, that the apostle clearly protects them against all such censures. Under such authority and influences the Jewish Sabbath gradually sunk into disuse. Thus it has been shown that the first day of the week gradually came to be observed, and the seventh day was gradually neglected, as Christianity gained, until the change became complete.

Third, This change took place under the eye of the apostles, who were inspired, and must have been within their sanction, if not their command. Their example doubtless lead the way, as it has been seen that they were the first to assemble on the first day of the week, the day on which the Master rose from the dead. This argument, when properly presented, must prove conclusive. Observe,

1. The apostles were clothed with divine authority to organize and settle the gospel church.

"Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and

whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."—Matt. xviii. 18.

This is a commission with plenary power to organize the gospel church, and to settle its laws and rules of government. To secure them from error in this important work, they had

2. The promise of divine direction.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John, xiv. 26.

Take the above two points together, and the argument must be conclusive. They were clothed with authority, and therefore what they did is binding ; and they were divinely guided, and therefore what they did was right—was in accordance with the will of God. What they bound on earth was to be bound (ratified) in heaven ; and they bound (established) the first day of the week as a day for Christian worship in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, and therefore this must be bound in heaven, and is of divine authority. They loosed the observance of the seventh day Sabbath on earth, as shown above, and therefore it is loosed in heaven, and is no more binding.

4. What greatly adds to the force of this historical sketch of the Christian Sabbath, is, that no other account can be given of it. If the change was not effected at the time and under the circumstances above supposed, when and under what circumstances was the change made? The change could not have been made at any other time, and the fact not be known. Could the day be now changed from Sunday to Monday, and not awaken a discussion which would leave its traces upon the record of the age, to be seen in future centuries? Certainly not. If the Christian Sab-

bath had been commenced at any other period than, as is supposed, immediately after the resurrection of Christ, it would be told when and under what circumstances the change was made. If the change was made, as has been supposed, under the eye of the apostles, it must be authoritative and binding on all Christians

III. The earliest ecclesiastical authority confirms the whole of the preceding argument. Before quoting authorities, it is proper to introduce one text from the Scriptures. John says, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day."—Rev. i. 10. By the Lord's day is meant the day on which Christ rose from the dead. This proves that the day was distinguished, and it is a significant fact that upon this day Jesus Christ opened the vision, and commenced the revelations of this remarkable book. The name itself is significant. "The Lord's day" corresponds with the words of the prophecy upon which this whole argument is based. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." Now, what is the "Lord's day," but "the day which the Lord hath made?" and what is "the day which the Lord hath made," but "the Lord's day?" The prophecy is clearly seen to receive its fulfilment, not only in the observance of the Christian Sabbath, but also in the very name by which the day was so early distinguished. This name has been introduced at this point, because, if any are disposed to question the fact that the first day of the week is meant by the Lord's day, the authorities about to be quoted will settle the question beyond a doubt.

Ignatius was a disciple of St. John, and is said to have been constituted the bishop of the church at Antioch, by that apostle. This is coming as near to apostolic authority as we can get outside

of the Scriptures themselves. In the epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians, section 1, he makes the following remark in speaking of the Jews and of their laws :—

“Wherefore, if they who were brought up in these ancient laws, come nevertheless to the newness of hope, no longer observing Sabbaths, but keeping the Lord’s day, in which our life is sprung up by him,” &c.

This clause proves, first, that Christians did not at that time observe Sabbaths ; secondly, that they did keep “the Lord’s day,” and thirdly, that the Lord’s day was the day on which he rose from the dead. The expression, “in which our life is sprung up by him,” is a clear allusion to his resurrection.

In the epistle of Barnabas, who is believed to have been the companion of St. Paul, named in the Acts of the Apostles, makes the following remark, section 15. He commences with a quotation from the prophet, “Your new moons and your Sabbaths, I cannot bear them. Consider what he means by it. The Sabbaths saith he, which ye now keep are not acceptable to me, but those which I have made ; when resting from all things, I shall begin the eighth day, that is, the beginning of the other world. For which cause we observe the eighth day with gladness, in which Jesus rose from the dead, and having manifested himself to his disciples, he ascended into heaven.”

Whatever else this quotation may contain, it contains very strong presumptive evidence that Christians had ceased to observe the Jewish Sabbath, while it positively proves that they did observe, with gladness, the day on which Christ rose from the dead. The prophet said, “this is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it ;” and Barnabas tells us that they ob-

served the day of Christ's resurrection "with gladness." Here, then, is a fulfilment of the prophecy.

Eusebius was born A. D. 267, and died 339. He was the author of the oldest ecclesiastical history now extant, and has been, consequently, called the father of ecclesiastical history. He wrote from such documents and facts as he could possess himself of, at a period of about two hundred years after the death of the apostles. A few extracts from his history follow. In speaking of the lives of the pious prior to the covenant with Abraham, he says, "They did not therefore regard circumcision, nor observe the Sabbath, neither do we."—Book 1, chap. 4, p. 26. The single point in this extract is, the early Christians did not observe the Jewish Sabbath.

In speaking of "the heresy of the Ebionites," an early sect, he says, "They also observe the Sabbath and other discipline of the Jews, but on the other hand, they also celebrate the Lord's day very much like us, in commemoration of his resurrection."—Book 3, ch. 27, p. 113. This clearly proves that, at that time, orthodox Christians did not observe the Jewish Sabbath, and that they did observe the Lord's day, in commemoration of his resurrection, and that the Lord's day was the first day of the week, for it was on this day that he rose.

In speaking of Dionysius he quotes from his epistle to Soter, as follows :

"To-day, we have passed the Lord's holy day, in which we have read your epistle."—Book 4, chap. 24, p. 160.

This shows that they were in the habit of meeting on the Lord's day, and that they regarded it as in some sense holier than other days.

Eusebius states, book 4, chap. 26, page 162, that there was then extant a discourse of Melito, "on the Lord's day."

IV. The Sabbatical institution, by being changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, secures all the advantages derived from the Jewish Sabbath, while it commemorates a greater event than the creation of the world, and tends to elevate and point human minds to higher interests than the setting up of the mountains or the lighting up of the sun.

As a day of rest, it secures all that could be secured by the seventh day Sabbath. As a means of religious instruction, it cannot be denied that the first day of the week can be rendered as efficient as the seventh. As a type of that eternal rest that "remaineth to the people of God," it is just as significant as the Jewish Sabbath. But when we look at its commemorative character, we see a reason for the change as much greater than existed for the appointment of the Sabbath at the finishing of God's six days' work, as redemption is greater and more glorious than creation. If creation shone resplendent with the glory of God, and the young orbs sung of the power of the hand that made them, of redemption it may be sung,

"Here the whole Deity is known,
Nor dares a creature guess
Which of the glories brightest shone,
The justice or the grace."

Redemption transcends creation, in proportion as an eternal weight of wo is a greater evil than simple non-existence, and as relationship to God, through incarnation of divinity, and heirship to Jehovah, securing eternal life and glory in heaven, involve higher interests than Adam's position amid Eden's earthly bowers. If, then, creation was worthy of such a monument as is seen in the hallowing of the seventh day, much more is redemption worthy of a like monument, and on what day can it be so appropriately set up, as upon the first

day of the week, upon which the Saviour rose from the dead ?

The seventh day Sabbath celebrated the work of creation, and for four thousand years did its weekly return talk of the day when God ceased from his works, when he had made the worlds and lit up the sun and the stars. The Christian Sabbath celebrates the world's redemption, and comes to us in its weekly return to remind us that we are lost in sin, and that we have been redeemed ; it comes to awaken our songs of gladness and to inspire our devotions. What deep and everlasting interests were involved in the resurrection of Christ ? What dismay did it send through all the ranks of the foes of God and man ? and how did the gates of hell tremble under its power ? What hopes and songs did it inspire in human hearts ? How did it dispel the horrors of death, and let in the light of immortality upon the darkness of the grave, and upon the contents of the mouldering urn ? Such an event was truly worthy of such a monument.

From all that has been said it must appear that the Christian Sabbath is of divine appointment, a part of the divine economy, and of binding obligation. The observance of the Christian Sabbath was foretold in a remarkable prediction, as has been shown ; it commenced from the very day on which Christ rose from the dead, and was observed by the early Christians in commemoration of the Saviour's resurrection, and has been observed ever since for nearly two thousand years, in every land and during every century where Christianity has prevailed. Can any one suppose that mere accident or caprice produced this array of combined facts ? It is impossible.

To the above, add that a Sabbath is essential to the carrying out of the gospel, as it stands and

is admitted upon the face of the record, and the argument for the Sabbath by divine right will be conclusive. Christianity could not be maintained in life and activity without a Sabbath, hence many who yield the point of divine authority, contend for the Sabbath on the ground of expediency. How absurd is this? It is to say that God has left what is essential to the success of the gospel, unsecured by divine obligation; that we may omit what is essential to the efficient carrying out of the gospel plan, without violating any divine law or obligation. It is to say that man, seeing a Sabbath to be necessary, sees clearer than God did when he planned the gospel, or that God, seeing a Sabbath necessary, has omitted to insert in the gospel, what he saw essential to its efficiency. It cannot be! It is therefore concluded that the view taken of the subject above is correct, and that the Christian Sabbath is a part of the divine economy, and of binding obligation.

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